Starting Over

By

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The sound of my heels clicking on the puddles of the parking lot as we run to the doors is as if they're gunshots, dogging us, inches away. Failing to keep completely dry, and not getting drenched, either, safe under the canopy. He opens the door for me, and the orchestral sound greets me before I feel the energy of people dancing. Removing the white coat, I hand it over to the coat-check man. Standing revealed in my dark blue dress, it still looks brand new. It doesn't look as if it's been resting, closed off from the world and my body, with nowhere to go, shut off from the trappings of time.

He hands the man his tan trench coat, revealing a black suit with a striped tie. Turning to the dance floor, we see we're in luck for it's a slow dance. No risk involved in finding a spot, for it's not too crowded. The band has the right touch with its horn section, and the saxophone is hot and smooth enough to melt frozen butter.

Not a familiar face among us as we reach the floor. We planned it that way. Taking my body in his arms, it is a touch I know well. I've known it, and missed it to the point I've almost forgotten it. His warmth, his spark, his very presence creates a magic that makes me live for the moment; for today; forever.

His muscles touch me, melting the years away, as if he never left. Looking up into those baby blue eyes, it makes me want to get lost in those pools; drown; never come up for air; never come out. Swaying to the band, he pulls me close. A little extra weight, but who cares? The warmth of his body keeps the tears at bay, shutting them out, swallowing them as I shut my eyes, with my lips threatening to tremble.

Those muscles, that stout, proud beat of his heart is a miracle of nature I could never understand, nor could I dare to reason why. Never mind I had to bury him, and those feelings, a lifetime ago; if only for a few years.

The past few hours unfold in my mind. How we went to a classy restaurant out of town so no one would recognize us; how we ate as if we forgotten how well food tasted, lost in each other's eyes. Aside from focusing on our food as we ate, we didn't take our eyes off each other. How could we? Questions that might have come never did. Time enough for them. Walking in the forest of details of each other; the color of each other's hair, the palate and texture of each other's skin; the depth of each other's eyes. Time may have changed some details a bit, but we could never forget.

Watching him cut his steak and eat with such proud gusto, more so than when he was alive, no one would ever think to imagine he was ever dead. The color, the life in his eyes, no one could believe it; just a few days ago I wouldn't have believed it. Awash in the monotony that was my living death, never going out except for food, I had forgotten to feel. It wasn't something I was conscious of. It didn't happen overnight. The years dragged on to the point I didn't bother to notice the life going out of my heart, going cold, forgetting how to laugh, never smiling.

Hearing stories of those whose hearts give out when their better half dies, and upset, jealous why the same never happened for me. Wondering why the anger and the grief never overtook me, angry for being alive, losing friends over it, until I forgot how I ended up in a clockwork routine.

Then I saw your face again at the back door. I guess I shouldn't be surprised I fainted, and that I wasn't conscious when you caught me, carrying me to the bed. No doubt you were watching me, waiting for me to open my eyes again. There's that feeling that ever since you've been back that I'll wake up and find that this is a dream, or that I'm somehow hallucinating, that this is all in my mind, that the grief finally got to me, and that I can't tell what's real anymore. But, I know that can't be true. Some things can never be faked. Your smell, your touch, your kiss, your mere presence: unmistakable.

That first night, you ate three meals. Not being alive does that, and having a new set of organs. Sure am glad that you were buried instead of cremated. It wasn't

my idea. You had it in writing. You could afford it. Most people go for cremations, but not you. You had a plan, a reason, and I stood by it, never questioned it. I knew I would see you again, but not like this. They say true love catches you by surprise, when you don't look for it. I hadn't thought of you for weeks before you came back; weeks, months, what does it matter? Time ceased to have meaning for me.

It's a good thing I kept your wardrobe. I couldn't bring myself to part with any of your things. It would be telling myself it's truly over. It saves us the time and money of getting new clothes.

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Tempo shifts into a rush. Footsteps turn bodies in unison. It is infectious as more join us on the floor, until we're a carousal. Not just his face, but the faces of other couples rush past me from the corners of my eyes. With your arms holding me, your eyes looking into me, I can't remember anything else. Hours dissolve and crumble, shattering the years you were gone.

A twist and turn, I feel the motion of his lead. Momentum pushes us along with the rest. There is a feeling that bubbles up from the frozen wastelands where my heart has resided. His eyes have melted that landscape, letting long dead flowers grow. A garden, lush with color has sprung to the surface, forcing me to shine. It is a smile. Not merely forgotten, but I feel I'm doing it for the first time. Not just with my mouth, but with my whole face, my entire body. I can't help it as we're pushed along in the waltz.

If I could see myself now, moving this body, this face, there would be no recognition. Who is this person that moves across the floor? I don't know her. Could be from somewhere deep within my heart, a dream. Someone that can slips through your fingers, even mine; never to be pinned down.

A quick turn away as we go around the floor again. His eyes look into mine again, never wanting to look away. My heart soars, round and round we go. There is no question why. Behind those eyes, guilt lies within. Living with fear, yet not being conscious of it until it was too late. Not living enough. Not living for each other. Too busy, too tired, too angry, until we didn't know each other.

Every move we made, we saw it coming. Every step, each word, was planned. We could live our lives in our sleep. No spontaneity, no spark, never a fire to be had. That spark is reflected in his eyes now. It is reflected back in me. We wouldn't never break our rhythm, drop everything, and go dancing. There's no one to object, not even us; No one to say no to second chances. That spark grows with each step. Soon there will be a fire within us, burning the past, and our past selves. Threatening to overtake, never burning. Raging for those who never get it right the first time, promising, yet never do. Not yet here, yet I know it well.

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The floor has cleared for all but a few. The music is still piping. Our energy is still raring, where others are spent and gone. He takes my hand in his, my feet follow his lead, in time to the violins. Slow steps here and there, one with the music. Never have I moved this way before. How can he? Has he brought this back from whence he came?

Familiarity comes with each step, with a slight dip, until he throws me out, still holding onto my hand. A quick pull brings me back. A step here and there, with no fear, not even when he raises his hand and spins me close. Wrap me up within yourself, and never let me go. I will disappear, and come out the other side, whole, a new person. I am blind in these steps that I take. His hand guides me as I follow, as we spin with the tempo. There is no map to where our hearts take us. No cares, no regrets: why does death have to make us live this way, to see this way?

To the end of the floor, and a sharp turn back, stepping with clasped hands outstretched. The path we weave disappears with each step. No eyes, desire, or even understanding can be made to follow. If any would dare to trail us, they would never find, for they would be lost.

Another spin as he holds me close, with another dip, looking deep into my eyes, past them and into my heart. Am I flying, are my feet really touching the ground, or does it just feel that they are? No. It is my heart that is soaring.

Inspiration comes about as the music drives him to turn me across the floor. These steps I know not, not even when he dips me for the final time as the music ends. As he brings me back up, we head back off the floor, to get our coats. Handed back, through the doors outside, and into a full-fledged storm, we race out, not caring to be drenched. No words need be spoken, for it is not home we go. No familiar path do we seek. Splashes of cascading rain hit the windshield as stray lights give them life. Passing us by, forever lost, never to be found.